

A Pragmatist and His Free Spirit



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A Pragmatist and His Free Spirit portrays the unconventional love of Hu Shi, a Chinese social reformer and civil rights pioneer, and Edith Clifford Williams, an American avant-garde artist of the early twentieth century. Hu studied at Cornell University, where he first met Williams, and Columbia University, where he worked with the famous pragmatist John Dewey. At the time of his death in 1962, he and Williams had exchanged more than 300 letters that, along with poems and excerpts from Hu's diaries and documents (some of which have never before been translated into English) form the center of this book.

In Williams, Hu found his intellectual match, a woman and fellow scholar who helped the reformer reconcile his independent scholarship with cultural tradition. Williams counseled Hu on the acceptance of an arranged marriage, and she influenced his pursuit of experimental vernacular poetry through an exposure to avant-garde art. In 1933, the two became lovers, although their romance would eventually dwindle. Nevertheless, Williams maintained a devoted and honest correspondence with Hu throughout his tumultuous life.

Hu's work touched on virtually every crucial aspect of twentieth-century Chinese society, particularly Chinese liberalism and the use of vernacular Chinese. *A Pragmatist and His Free Spirit* explores the lesser-known side of this major philosopher while reconstructing his romance with Williams. Not only does the volume place Hu within the larger social, economic, and political context of his time, but it also provides readers with a multifaceted portrait of China's dramatic modern history.

Hu Shi: Father of the Modern Chinese Renaissance 1891: Born in a suburb of Shanghai; 1962: Died in Taipei. Married with three children. Possibly the most documented life in modern China. Earned a B.A. and M.A. at Cornell University; Earned a Ph.D. at Columbia University, where he studied with the famous pragmatist John Dewey. Became a leading figure of the Chinese Literary Revolution of 1919, advocating the use of vernacular Chinese and the importance of intellectual individualism. Became a civil rights advocate who promoted the empowerment of women. Served as the Republic of China's Ambassador to the United States from 1938 to 1942. Installed as president of Peking University from 1946 to 1948. Worked as curator of Princeton University's Gest Library from 1950 to 1952. Became the target in absentia of a massive political denunciation campaign launched by the Chinese government between 1954 and 1955. Served as president of Academia Sinica, Taipei, from 1958 to 1962. Quoted as saying: "Be bold in your hypothesis; be meticulous in your verification."

Edith Clifford Williams: A Woman Ahead of Her Time 1885: Born in Ithaca, New York; 1971: Died in Barbados. Claims to have followed her father's advice: "Don't marry unless you can't help it." Studied at Yale University School of Art and the Académie Julian in Paris. Became a pioneer of abstract art and a member of Alfred Stieglitz's inner circle. Worked as the first full-time librarian of Cornell University's Veterinary Library from 1923 to 1946. Completed two modernist works of monumental importance: *Two Rhythms* (1916), a painting now housed at the Philadelphia Museum of Art; and *Plâtre à toucher chez de Zayas* (1916), a sculpture made for touching that was featured in Marcel Duchamp's 1917 journal, *Rongwrong*, and used as the subject of a lecture by Guillaume Apollinaire in Paris.

作者介绍:

Susan Chan Egan is an independent scholar based in Santa Barbara, California. She is the author of *A Latterday Confucian: Reminiscences of William Hung (1893-1980)* and cotranslator of Wang Anyi's *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow: A Novel of Shanghai*.

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